

Nato council to meet in Bahrain next year, says official

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Manama: Bahrain will host a meeting of the North Atlantic Council, the most important decision-making body in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato), a senior Nato official has said.

"The Bahraini authorities have informed us they will host the meeting in April," Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo, Nato Deputy Secretary-General told Gulf News during his working visit over the weekend.

The North Atlantic Council (NAC) consists of permanent representatives of all member countries and has effective political authority and powers of decision. It also has an important public profile and issues declarations and communiqués explaining Nato policies and decisions to the public and to governments of countries which are not members of Nato.

Bahrain, a major non-Nato ally since March 2002, will be the second country in the Gulf to host a meeting of the council, following Kuwait in December last year.

"We are pleased with the way our relations with Bahrain are moving. However, we are both keen on achieving higher levels of cooperation and I am confident that the planned meeting next year in Manama will be an excellent opportunity to bring together officials from Nato and from the Gulf countries for further talks," Minuto-Rizzo said.

During the visit, Bahrain and Nato initialised the Security of Information Agreement, a facilitator for the exchange of classified information.

"The talks between the two sides focused on the ongoing developments in the implementation by the Kingdom of Bahrain of the practical areas of cooperation with Nato under the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative," Nicola de Santis, the head of the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative Countries Section in the Nato Public Diplomacy Division, told Gulf News.

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